UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1997/148
18 April 1997

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-third session
Agenda item 13

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE THIRD DECADE TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Letter dated 18 April 1997 from the head of the delegation of the United States of America to the Commission on Human Rights addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

I have the honour to transmit to you the explanation of position of the United States of America concerning the resolution found in document E/CN.4/1997/L.12/Rev.1. I hereby request that this statement* be distributed as an official document of the fifty-third session of the Commission on Human Rights.

(Signed) Nancy Rubin
Head of the United States delegation
to the United Nations Commission on
Human Rights

---

* The annex is circulated as received, in the language of submission only.

ANNEX

Explanation of Position: L.12 & L.9 -- Racism
Nancy Rubin, Head of US Delegation, UN Human Rights Commission
April 18, 1997

Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the United States, I would like to express our deep appreciation for the extraordinary work of the delegations from Turkey, Egypt, and Senegal in elaborating these resolutions before us.

While they were adopted without a vote, we fully and whole-heartedly support its goal of eradicating the scourge of racism. Improving race relations is crucial to my country. President Clinton made it the core theme of his inaugural address in January, when he called on Americans of every race, religion or political view to overcome prejudice.

Promoting racial harmony in the United States is a primary concern of our national, state and local government and involves citizens at every level of our society. We continue to develop new methods and strategies to combat racial intolerance, and we encourage other countries to convene national meetings, as we are doing in the United States, to address this issue and to ensure that such meetings are as inclusive as possible.

The United States is pleased that this resolution reaffirmed the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Racism. This mandate calls upon the Special Rapporteur "to examine incidents of contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, any forms of

discrimination, inter alia against Blacks, Arabs and Muslims, negrophobia, anti-semitism and related intolerance."

The United States was one of the first countries to invite the Special Rapporteur to visit on a fact-finding mission. Although we did not agree with all his conclusions or methods of operation, we believe it is vitally important for him to continue his work. Indeed, we fully support the Special Rapporteur's role in examining the question of racism in all its forms, as set out in his mandate.

We have all seen the human cost when men and women are judged not by their individual qualities, but on the basis of their race, religion, ethnicity, culture, or nationality. We believe it is therefore of the utmost importance for the UN to continue providing a forum for the world community to combat racism and racial intolerance.

We cannot, however, support any recommendation for a World Conference on Racism or any other world conference at this time. World Conferences are extremely expensive. We believe there are more productive ways of fighting this problem. The time, money and energy invested in a World Conference would be better invested in combatting racial problems directly.

We all know that the United Nations is facing severe financial

difficulties, Mr. Chairman. To convene another World Conference at the very time the UN is trying to return to financial solvency cannot help it achieve this goal.

What we need, is action, not more words. The international community already has a comprehensive human rights treaty on racism: the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Before convening yet another World Conference we should fulfil the objectives that this treaty has already established.

We would like to take a moment to note that the process of reaching agreement among delegates from virtually every corner of the world on such a complex issue as racism demonstrates the high level of determination that exists in the global community to end this persistent problem. The United States is committed to do what it can to help eradicate racism and promote respect for universal human rights for all people.

With reference to the general comments on the PBI, we would also like to associate ourselves with the statement given by the distinquished representatives of Canada and The Netherlands. The U.S. recalls that L.12 Rev.1 called for the World Conference to be held "with all due regard for economy." We note that the PBI in connection with the conference, given in document L.115, calls for expenditures on the order of 3 million dollars for a

conference to be held in Geneva. My delegation will return to this issue in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly with a view to ensuring that the request of the Commission to use "all due economy" is taken into account.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.